



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA. Copyright restrictions apply. 22 Aug 05

'War room' set for Texans as panel ponders closings

Web Posted: 08/22/2005 12:00 AM CDT

Gary Martin
Express-News Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — When an independent panel meets at a suburban hotel this week to determine the fate of hundreds of U.S. military facilities, a contingent of Texans will be following events closely from an improvised "war room" nearby.

The suite, rented by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, is a few floors above the ballroom at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington, Va., where the Base Closure and Realignment Commission, commonly known as BRAC, will begin marathon deliberations Wednesday morning.

By the end of the week, the panel will have rendered final judgment on a sweeping Pentagon plan to shutter military installations across the country, including four in Texas.

"We are going to keep going right up to the end," Hutchison, R-Texas, told the San Antonio Express-News. "We are going to leave no stone unturned."

Hutchison and other state leaders are working to save missions at Brooks City-Base in San Antonio, Naval Station Ingleside, and the Red River Army Depot and Lone Star Ammunition Plant, both in Texarkana.

In addition, dozens of other Texas bases and facilities face cuts and realignments.

The "war room" will be staffed by Hutchison aides to accommodate officials traveling from Texas to monitor the fates of hometown installations.

It also will serve as a communications hub, relaying information back to communities from daily hearings that are expected to continue late into the night.

The commission will vote on more than 1,800 proposals, including the recommended closure of 33 major bases and the realignment of 29 others.

Altogether, the Pentagon estimates the plan will save \$48.8 billion over the next 20 years.

Critics argue the estimated savings are inflated, and they have challenged the legality of closing state Air National Guard centers — as proposed in the plan — without the consent of governors.

The Pentagon says similar claims of exaggerated savings were made in the previous rounds in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995.

"We stand by the recommendations," said Glenn Flood, a Pentagon spokesman.

San Antonio Express News

PAGE:

POSTED: 22 Aug 05



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA. Copyright restrictions apply. 22 Aug 05

A recent Justice Department ruling found the Defense Department has the legal authority to shut guard bases and move aircraft often used by states during local emergencies.

The commission's final deliberations follow months of on-site visits and regional hearings to hear testimony from community leaders.

"The process has not been easy," panel Chairman Anthony Principi said. "Much thought and consideration is going into each one of these decisions."

By law, the panel must submit its final recommendations to the president by Sept. 8. The House and Senate have until Nov. 7 to either accept or reject the roster in its entirety.

Bush signaled this month he would endorse the commission's recommendations, telling Texas reporters in an interview: "I'm going to accept their recommendations as presented."

In the four previous rounds, the base closure panels accepted 85 percent of Pentagon recommendations.

Observers of the process predict similar results this time.

"I don't think you are going to see a wholesale rearranging of the list," said Paul Taibl with Business Executives for National Defense, a Washington-based think tank.

"The commission will make some changes due to the fact that there are more realignments than closures, but for the most part the list is going to stand," Taibl said.

To monitor the commission votes, communities have snapped up suites and rooms at the hotel, and lawmakers are providing assistance to the legions of local leaders traveling to the nation's capital to protect federal spending that flows through military installations.

The Texas war room includes a computer, high-speed Internet connection and a fax machine.

"It's a central location for people to meet and to relay back to their communities what is going on," said Chris Paulitz, a Hutchison spokesman.

"We are going to have eight to 10 communities represented, with three to five officials from each community," Paulitz said.

San Antonio officials have urged the panel to spare Brooks and rethink the realignment of some missions at Lackland AFB, which together would result in the loss of more than 6,000 jobs.

Even so, San Antonio figures to see a net gain of about 3,500 jobs, thanks to an ambitious plan to expand Brooke Army Medical Center and establish Fort Sam Houston as a Center for Joint Enlisted Training. Those projects will generate about \$1 billion in construction and bring in more than 9,300 jobs.

"San Antonio is in good shape," Hutchison said.

San Antonio Express News

PAGE:

POSTED: 22 Aug 05



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA. Copyright restrictions apply. 22 Aug 05

Retired Brig. Gen. John Jernigan, chairman of a local military task force, said city officials would remain vigilant, though, and monitor BRAC decisions because the Pentagon has proposed "70 different realignments that affect San Antonio."

"I'll be glad when this is all over," Jernigan said.

State leaders are more concerned about Texarkana and the Coastal Bend region with the loss of 7,700 jobs at the Red River depot, the ammunition plant and the Ingleside port.

"I know the Department of Defense is pushing very hard for its recommendations," said Hutchison, who continued to lobby the commission in the week leading up to the vote. "I'm concerned about Red River; I'm concerned about Ingleside."

With good reason.

Taibl said efforts to spare Ingleside would take an "extraordinary effort" and would entail a "hugely costly endeavor" for the Navy to keep it open.

Maintenance depots, meanwhile, like the one in Texarkana, "are not high on this commission's list," Taibl said.

San Antonio Express News

PAGE:

POSTED: 22 Aug 05



AETC News Clips

Altus AFB, Okla.



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA. Copyright restrictions apply. **22 Aug 05**

Altus Air Force Base makes shuttle feel at home

By Michael Kinney, staff writer

ALTUS -- NASA discovered long ago that Altus Air Force Base would be of great use to its program. Six times in the past 20 years a space shuttle has landed at the base as it made its way across the country.

AAFB showed its usefulness to NASA once again Friday when Space Shuttle Discovery made a pitstop in Altus to refuel on its way to Cape Canaveral, Fl., after completing the first mission in space since the Columbia 2 1/2 years ago.

"It's great to be here," astronaut Greg Johnson said after touching down at AFB. "We appreciate being able to use the base."

Johnson is the manager of launch integration at the Kennedy Space Center and was in charge of the crew of 26 NASA personnel that combined to take the shuttle from California to Florida.

The shuttle caught a ride on the back of a modified Boeing 747 jumbo jet as it took off from Edwards Air Force Base at 10:30 a.m. on Friday. After three hours and 930 miles, the jet landed in Altus, completing the first leg of its 2,232 mile journey.

With nearly ideal conditions, the jet approached the AFB runway from the north and completed a perfect landing. After taking on 160 thousand pounds of fuel, the jet and shuttle took off at 4:15 heading to Barksdale Air Force Base in Shreveport, La., where it stayed the night. The jet transporting the shuttle was scheduled to land at Altus Air Force Base at 10:30 a.m. But complications arose that delayed its takeoff from Edwards. However, it was all part of the process for the NASA crew.

"We had some issues we were dealing with," said Stephanie Stilson, NASA's vehicle manager for Discovery. "Had some issues with weather. Also had flying ants we had to deal with. We got that taken care of and got in good condition for flying."

Despite its long history of shuttle stops, the roads around AAFB were still littered with vehicles and sightseers who came to see Discovery.

"We came here to see the shuttle," said E.D. Law, who was parked just a couple of hundred feet away from the runway. "We saw the last one disintegrate. It has always been a fascinating thing. It's a wonderful thing. We pulled our son out of school for this."

The journey home for Discovery cost more than a \$1 million in funds. The jet flew at 320 mph and at an altitude of 15,000 feet. A KC-135 jet named The Pathfinder landed 30 minutes ahead of the jet and Discovery to help with navigation. It was scheduled to land at Cape Canaveral on Saturday, but arrival has been delayed.

The entire atmosphere was exciting the onlookers as they came for a peak at NASA pride and joy.

"This is my second one," said Tim Siniard of Altus. "It's intriguing to know where it's been and what it's done."

Altus Times
PAGES: 1A & 3A
DATE: 22 Aug 05



AETC News Clips

Altus AFB, Okla.



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA. Copyright restrictions apply. **22 Aug 05**

On Aug. 9 Discovery landed at Edwards after a two week mission to service the international space station. The shuttle and its seven man crew were all made back safely, which was the top priority.

Since the Columbia tragedy there had been speculation that space exploration is no longer worth the price. The NASA crew that escorted Discovery believes that is not the case.

"Our last landing was in August of 2001," Stilson said. "What we do is fly space shuttles. It's good we can show the world we can bring our people back safely. We don't see it as pressure because that is our job. The team is used to that. They do their best work under those circumstances."